

## ***Introduction to the Problematic***

One of the problems faced in interpreting Marx's concept of ideology is that he himself did not define the term in his writings. Even in the one work where Marx wrote most extensively on ideology, *The German Ideology*, he failed to provide us with a definition of the term. However, in the writings of Engels, Marx's life-long personal friend and political associate, and coauthor with Marx of several works, including *The German Ideology*, we do find a definition of ideology. In a letter to Franz Mehrings (14 July 1898), Engels defined ideology in the following manner:

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces. Because it is a process of thought he derives its form as well as its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors. He works with mere thought material, which he accepts without examination as the product of thought, and does not investigate further for a more remote source independent of thought; indeed this is a matter of course to him, because, as all action is mediated by thought, it appears to him to be ultimately based upon thought.<sup>1</sup>

According to the above definition, some of the more prominent characteristics of the ideological false consciousness include the following: (1) human agents are unaware or ignorant of the motive forces impelling their thoughts and actions, i.e., false consciousness entails a lack of real knowledge and an obliviousness to causal influences;<sup>2</sup> (2) what people “imagine” to be the case (what agents perceive to be their real motives in action and the grounds of their beliefs) is not really the case, i.e., ideology entails a set of false or illusory beliefs, even self-deceptions; and (3) human agents possess false consciousness because they interpret their own motives and the source of their ideas in an idealistic way (i.e., “...because all action is mediated by thought, it appears to him to be ultimately based upon thought...”)

Now, if Engels’s notion of false consciousness defines the classical Marxist conception of ideology, then we should find in the writings of Marx a replication and an approximate facsimile of all or some of the above characteristics. But did Marx have a conception of ideology similar in meaning to Engels’s notion of false consciousness?

Some commentators believe he did. For example, in his *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay*, Martin Seliger argues that Engels’s conception of false consciousness defines Marx’s conception of ideology as well:

It seems that Marx himself did not use the phrase ‘false consciousness’. This makes no difference as far as his conception of ideological thought is concerned, since instead of ‘false’ Marx used ‘incorrect’, ‘twisted’ ‘untrue’ and ‘abstract’ besides nouns like ‘illusion’, etc. We may thus take ‘false consciousness’ to denote Marx’s view as well.<sup>3</sup>

David Braybrooke seems to concur with Seliger on this point. In his *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on “ideology,” Braybrooke, like Seliger, argues that for Marx ideology

signified a false consciousness of social and economic realities, a collective illusion shared by members of a given social class and in history distinctively associated with that class.<sup>4</sup>

However, not all commentators agree with the interpretation that for Marx, ideology signified false consciousness. In a recent book on Marx’s conception of ideology, Joe McCarney rejects any

attempt to attribute to Marx an “epistemological” conception of ideology. In particular, McCarney rejects the claim that Marx had a conception of ideology as false consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

What McCarney has to say about Engels’s definition of ideology as false consciousness is of especial interest. First of all, though McCarney argues that there exists a basic “congruence between [Engels’s] treatment of the ideological and that of Marx,”<sup>6</sup> McCarney contends that Engels’s definition of ideology is not in congruence with the predominant conception of ideology suggested by their writings. In fact, McCarney believes that the notion of false consciousness is incompatible with Marx’s sociological conception of ideology because of its psychological connotations. McCarney remarks:

It is hard to see how this [definition of ideology as false consciousness] can be taken at anything like face value. Ideology for Marx, and for Engels elsewhere, is an objective social phenomenon grounded in and guaranteed by the existence of classes. Its secret is not to be found in the blindness of individuals to the “motive forces” of their thinking. Where such a suggestion naturally leads is towards the elaboration of theories of ideology along psycho-analytical or existential lines. Within the classical Marxist framework ideology cannot be identified with any kind of self-deception, rationalization or bad faith.<sup>7</sup>

Now, if the notion of false consciousness doesn’t define the classical Marxist conception of ideology, then how does McCarney explain Engels’s use of the term in defining ideology? According to McCarney, Engels definition should be viewed as

...an aberration, an instance of that curious uncertainty of touch [Engels] could sometimes display, even on matters supposedly central to doctrines held jointly with Marx...<sup>8</sup>

Hence, in McCarney’s view, Engels usage of the notion of false consciousness was an “aberration” or a passing “whim” of the moment which neither he nor Marx, particularly Marx, were to utilize in the bulk of their writings concerning ideology and the ideological consciousness. Now, McCarney’s interpretation of Marx’s conception of ideology as well as his disparaging remarks concerning Engels’s notion of false consciousness are reflective of a broader contemporary trend in

the reinterpretation of the classical Marxist conception of ideology. Like McCarney, what many contemporary theorists would like to do is to expunge any conception of false consciousness from both Marxist and non-Marxist social theory and philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

A review of the most recent and, in some cases, the most influential commentaries on Marx's conception of ideology will bear witness to this almost universal rejection of the notion of false consciousness. For example, David McLellan's book, *Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), summarizes the majority opinion as well as the majority's assessment of Engels's intellectual abilities in the following way:

The first point to be made is that Marx never used the expression 'false consciousness': the originator of this expression was Engels, whose rather jejune views on ideology...<sup>10</sup>

McLellan also goes on in an Althusserian vein to argue that anyone attempting to attribute a conception of false consciousness to Marx's theories will not be able to find textual support for their interpretation in the later writings of Marx:

...any attempt to equate ideology and false consciousness in Marx must rely heavily on *The German Ideology* as opposed to Marx's later writings.<sup>11</sup>

Jorge Larraín has written two books on ideology in recent years to argue, among other things, that the concept of false consciousness is unsound because it is ambiguous, because it fails to convey the sociological nature of Marx's conception of ideology, and finally, because it has implications for the science/ideology distinction which are unacceptable.<sup>12</sup>

On a different though related track, contemporary critics also reject the notion of false consciousness because it entails an epistemological conception of ideology. What contemporary commentators would like to do is to move away from the notion that ideology somehow concerns a problem of knowledge and move towards the notion that ideology is a matter of practical social rationality in which the categories of truth and falsehood do not apply. For example, in his influential essay entitled "Marxism and Humanism," Louis Althusser argues that ideology is important primarily for its noncognitive, social functions.



...an ideology...is distinguished from science in that its practico-social function is more important than the theoretical function (function as knowledge).<sup>13</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Istvan Meszaros in his recent *Philosophy, Ideology, and Social Science* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) offers as a Marxist definition of ideology the following:

Ideology, as a specific form of social consciousness, is inseparable from class societies. It is constituted as the inescapable practical consciousness of such societies, concerned with the articulation of rival sets of values and strategies aimed at controlling the social metabolism.<sup>14</sup>

In Meszaros's opinion, Marx himself suggested this practical, sociological conception of ideology in his 1859 preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. According to Meszaros, in the preface Marx did not distinguish between science and ideology in accordance with a true/false consciousness criterion. Rather, Marx's comparison of ideology with science indicates that he viewed the two as having rationalities serving different kinds of functions—i.e., science as theoretical reason serving cognitive functions and ideology as practical reason serving noncognitive ends.

It is this practical orientation that defines also they type of rationality appropriate to ideological discourse...to imagine that socialist theory could afford to be 'ideology free'... is in fact a self-disarming strategy...the point is not to oppose science to ideology in a positivistic dichotomy but to establish their practical viable unity.<sup>15</sup>

This contemporary view that the categories of truth and falsehood are irrelevant to the practical, noncognitive nature of ideological rationality is also argued for by Alex Callinicos in his recent book *Marxism and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). In alluding to Marx's remarks on ideology in the preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Callinicos states:

If we take seriously the 'pragmatic' dimension of ideology, the determination of ideologies by the class struggle, then the question of the truth or falsity of ideologies is besides

the point. What matters is that they are the 'forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.'<sup>16</sup>

Thus, we see that there are a number of contemporary objections to the interpretation of Marx as having a conception of false consciousness as well as philosophical objections against the very notion of a false consciousness. To summarize, the main points of the contemporary critique of the interpretation of Marx as having a conception of false consciousness are as follows: (1) the conception of false consciousness is a concept developed by Engels; it is not found in the writings of Marx; (2) Engels's definition of false consciousness has heavy psychological connotations which are incompatible with the sociological conception of ideology as developed by Marx; (3) the very notion of false consciousness is inherently unsound because it is vague and ambiguous, and/or because a "true" or "scientific" consciousness cannot be established in opposition to a "false" consciousness;<sup>17</sup> (4) the concept of false consciousness is an epistemological notion, thereby encouraging the understanding of ideology as primarily an issue of knowledge; however, for Marx, the practical, noncognitive social functions of ideology were more important than the cognitive function of ideology. In addition, as evidenced by his political writings and preface of 1859, Marx departed from his earlier writings on ideology to develop a nonepistemological and sociological conception of ideology in his later writings; (5) as an epistemological notion, false consciousness implies a true consciousness; but the categories of truth and falsehood are irrelevant to the essentially practical, noncognitive nature of ideological rationality; (6) a false consciousness implies a true consciousness and this distinction would imply that Marx distinguished science from ideology in accordance with a true/false criterion. But Marx, according to some commentators, did not distinguish between science and ideology in accordance with a true/false consciousness dichotomy. Hence, if Marx did not distinguish between science and ideology in accordance with a true/false criterion, then ideology could not have been false consciousness for Marx.

It is my opinion that this contemporary line of interpretation of Marx's conception of ideology is off the mark and not true to the writings of Marx on ideology. First of all, I believe that there does exist a fundamental similarity between the writings of Marx and

Engels on ideology and that the notion of false consciousness essentially defines Marx's conception of ideology. This congruence between Marx's and Engels's conception of ideology as false consciousness is evident: (a) in their writings on scientific methodology in the social sciences (e.g., their calls for social scientists to distinguish between what social agents imagine to be the case about the nature of their societies, their political aims, etc., and what really is the case as known by means of scientific theoretical analysis); (b) in their mutual philosophical concern with opposing and criticizing all idealist forms of understanding from a historical materialist perspective; (c) in their historical and political writings on the political false consciousness of social agents engaged in historical political struggles; (d) in their writings concerning the origins and nature of an alienated, mystified social consciousness; and finally, (d) in their writings in which Marx and Engels identify the common intellectual and historical roots of their conception of false consciousness/ideology.

Furthermore, I contend that there exist significant continuities between Marx's earlier and later writings on ideology which support the interpretation of Marx as having a conception of ideology as false consciousness similar to that of Engels. In particular, I see evidence of strong continuities between the young Marx's analyses of alienated and inverted forms of consciousness with the older Marx's analyses of commodity fetishisms in *Capital*. Hence, I reject the contention that Marx's later writings "break" with his earlier writings on ideology.

My claim that there is textual support for the thesis that Marx and Engels thought alike in their understanding of ideology as entailing the notion of false consciousness will have to be demonstrated in the pages ahead. But before going further, I would like to respond briefly to some of the objections raised by McCarney and others who would reject my interpretation. First of all, it is not clear to me what is necessarily "psychoanalytical" about the notion of false consciousness and why one can't give a sociological interpretation to the notion compatible with the historical materialist outlook of Marx. The idea that people possess false consciousness because they are "blind to the motive force of their thinking," and have illusions about their real motives in action or illusions about the "*a priori*, universality" of their thoughts seems to me to be quite compatible with Marx's claim that people generally are unaware of the social factors influencing their thinking and action, and as a result begin to think falsely about the nature of their

social interests in politics or think falsely about the origins and validity of their ideas. For example, Marx's writings suggest that political actors are often socially and historically "unconscious" and as a result are deceived by their own political ideologies into thinking that their political agendas serve universal common interests when in fact they serve particular class interests. In addition, Marx's writings suggest that because people are historically and socially "unconscious" and inclined towards idealist interpretations of their "conscious thoughts"—i.e., people will falsely attribute an *a priori*, eternally valid status to their socially determined and historically relative ideas.

This conception of false consciousness—i.e., that people possess false consciousness because they are "blind to the motive force of their thinking" and have illusions about their real aims in action—is a conception that Marx and Engels most likely inherited from Hegel's notion of "the cunning of Reason." Hegel's notion of "the cunning of Reason" suggests a nonpsychological conception of false consciousness. According to Hegel, history-making agents possess false consciousness because they are unaware of the impersonal, systematic forces determining their thoughts and behavior while at the same time having illusions about their historical interests. This interpretation linking Marx's conception with one of Hegel's conceptions of false consciousness is prominent in the commentaries of George Lichtheim and Erich Fromm, both of whom interpret Marx as having a conception of ideology as false consciousness.

For example, according to Lichtheim in his essay on "The Concept of Ideology,"

the problem of ideology (in the sense of false consciousness or imperfect consciousness) arises from Hegel because in his view individuals are instruments of history, executors of a process whose meaning is concealed from them...<sup>18</sup>

Fromm, in his book *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, writes:

...Hegel's philosophy of history had a decisive influence on Marx's thought and contained the concept of man serving the aims of history without his knowledge. According to Hegel, it is the 'cunning of reason' which makes man an agent of the absolute idea while he is subjectively driven by his own conscious goals and individual passions.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, I believe that the notion of false consciousness is amendable to a sociological, Marxist interpretation and is not inherently a psychological conception (although, granted, it is difficult to avoid associating the notion with psychoanalysis, given the prominence of the Freudian influence in modern intellectual culture). In fact, while comparisons between Marx's conception of ideology as false consciousness and Freud's idea of rationalization are sometimes drawn by commentators, at the same time most commentators seek to differentiate between Marx's sociological understanding of ideological rationalization and Freud's psychological view. For example, after discussing the similarities between the Marxist approach to ideology with the psychoanalytical view of rationalization, Arnold Hauser points out that the difference between the two theories lies in the fact that for historical materialism, the

concept of ideology is not based in a personal, empirical psychological theory of motivation, but on the socio-historical forces which express themselves in men's ideas, emotions and actions—often without their knowledge or intention...<sup>20</sup>

In a related vein, John McMurty in his book *The Structure of Marx's World-View* points out that while Marx's

concept of ideology is closely akin to our everyday concept of rationalization...[the difference] in his case [is that] the articulation and referent of such rationalization is social rather than 'private' or 'individual'...<sup>21</sup>

Since rationalization entails self-deception, in accordance with the above comparison we can talk about a psychological account of personal self-deception and a Marxist sociological account of social group-deception. Thus, while Freud might talk about how individuals can be deceived by their personal psychological rationalizations, Marx in a somewhat different but analogous way could talk about social groups as being deceived by their own social ideologies which rationalize their class interests. Furthermore, by distinguishing between Marxist and Freudian theories, we thus can see how the ideological false consciousness can denote group or collective delusory thinking about social phenomena as opposed to the psychological conception of idiosyncratic personal delusions.<sup>22</sup>

Now, if we follow the interpretation of Arnold Hauser and others<sup>23</sup> we are led to believe that what Marx and Engels meant by false consciousness is that social agents are deluded or deceived by their own ideologies concerning their real motives in political struggles. But does this definition of false consciousness as a kind of deluded social consciousness or collective self-deception convey what Marx and Engels meant by false consciousness? Two of the problems confronting this book are that I must both demonstrate that Marx like Engels had a conception of ideology as false consciousness and attempt to define what is meant by "false consciousness." One hears the term "false consciousness" bandied about in academic circles, but there has been very little work devoted to analyzing its meaning or meanings. And as the critics Larrain and McLellan have suggested, the vagueness and ambiguity associated with the notion of false consciousness perhaps render the notion unattractive to contemporary eyes.

There is some truth to what Larrain and McLellan argue, and for at least two reasons. First of all, Larrain is correct in his argument that "the expression 'false consciousness' by itself does not specify the falsity which ideology entails,"<sup>24</sup> and this is the reason, according to McLellan, why the notion of false consciousness is vague.<sup>25</sup> But Larrain seems to think that for Marx ideology must denote a specific and unique kind of error,<sup>26</sup> which I believe is a dubious assumption. In fact, it is closer to the truth to say that for Marx there are a number of diverse kinds of errors and falsehoods associated with ideology and false consciousness. And because there are a number of errors and falsehoods associated with the ideological consciousness, the notion of false consciousness appears to have more than one meaning in commentaries on Marx.

For example, unlike Arnold Hauser, who links Marx's conception of false consciousness with the error of rationalization, Allen Wood in his book on *Karl Marx* links Marx's conception of false consciousness with the notion of "alienation." According to Wood, Marx inherited a conception of false consciousness as an "alienated consciousness" from his study of Hegel and Feuerbach. In Wood's account,

both of Marx's predecessors regard alienation as consisting fundamentally in a certain form of acute false conscious-

ness, in a certain error or illusion about oneself, one's humanity or one's relation to ultimate reality...[and] Marx agrees with Hegel and Feuerbach that alienation is closely associated with a certain kind of false consciousness...<sup>27</sup>

The falsehood associated with this "alienated consciousness" appears to be of two kinds, depending on which commentary of Marx one examines. In the first instance, some commentators see the alienated consciousness as false because it "reifies" socially determined thought as a separate "ontological reality" divorced from human, social praxis. As a result of this intellectual reification, human thought becomes lost in a world of its own imaginary abstractions and hence out of touch with reality. This interpretation of Marx's concept of an alienated consciousness is given, for example, by Walter Carlsnaes among others. According to Carlsnaes, for Marx

an ideological consciousness is 'false' not only in the reified sense of being a 'consciousness' which posits a realm of ideas 'above or beyond' man's praxis, but is also necessarily false since such an imputation rests on the assumption that 'ideas' are not determined by man's material conditions.<sup>28</sup>

Typically, commentators attribute this characterization of the alienated false consciousness to idealist philosophical conceptions and abstract metaphysical thinking, an attribution which they believe Marx intended in his critique of the "illusions of speculative philosophy" as found in *The German Ideology*.<sup>29</sup>

In the second instance, some commentators see the alienated consciousness as false because social agents fail to recognize social reality as a product of their collective labor. From the perspective of this "alienated" or "reified consciousness," according to Carolyn Porter, social reality has the character of a being a reified, alien "thing-in-itself," "operating according to its own immutable laws."<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein, Brian Fay also sees this sense of alienated false consciousness in the writings of Marx. According to Fay, "alienated creatures," for Marx,

...do not see themselves in the 'objects' they have created...[they] do not recognize the world they have created as their own world, but rather take it to be something 'just there', something given, something alien and powerful...<sup>31</sup>

Typically, commentators attribute this version of the alienated false consciousness to Marx's analysis of "the fetishism of commodities" in *Capital*.<sup>32</sup> And in contrast to the first version of the alienated false consciousness, this second sense is seen to be indicative of the mind-set of all members in capitalist society, and not just of intellectuals or philosophers. In any case, the above examples suggest that for Marx there may be more than one kind of error or falsity entailed by the notion of false consciousness, as well as different senses of false consciousness.

In fact, the kind of falsity stipulated as being characteristic of Marx's conception of false consciousness may depend, in the final analysis, on which historical and intellectual influence one sees as significant to Marx's conception of ideology. For example, while Allen Wood and others emphasize the influence of the German philosophical tradition (i.e., Hegel and Feuerbach) on Marx's notion of false consciousness, others like Alex Callinicos see the influence of the Baconian and French materialist tradition on Marx. According to Callinicos,

the concept of ideology [as false consciousness]...has its origins in Bacon's theory of idols, which was taken up by such philosophes as Helvetius and Holbach in their critique of the prejudices...Marx took over and radicalized this analysis by inserting it into his general theory of class struggle.<sup>33</sup>

Callinicos suggests that the notion of false consciousness bequeathed to Marx by the *philosophes* was the notion of a "manipulated" social consciousness—i.e., the lies, deceptions and disinformation that propagandists for the ruling class use to manipulate the social consciousness of subordinate groups in the interests of the rulers. In supporting this interpretation of false consciousness, Callinicos refers to Marx's (and Engels's) remarks in *The German Ideology* where Marx (and Engels) contend that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" because the ruling class "controls the means of mental production so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it." In commenting on this passage, Callinicos concludes:

This analysis is evidently a development of the Enlightenment critique of religion as a conspiracy of priests and rulers to keep the masses in the dark.<sup>34</sup>



On the other hand, if one were to begin with the influence of Francis Bacon on Marx, one could talk about false consciousness in a Baconian vein as denoting a false understanding and distorted perception of social reality. According to Bacon, the human understanding and perception of reality are falsified and distorted in a number of ways by certain irrational influences and common fallacies which Bacon referred to as "the idols of the mind." Some commentators are apparently intrigued by Bacon's views and suggest that for Marx a socially derived "distorted" perception epitomizes the essential kind of error characteristic of the ideological consciousness. For example, in his introductory text on Marx and Engels, Richard Schmitt writes that

since the concept of ideology carries with it the connotation of 'distortion', ideology is often characterized, quite generally, as false consciousness.<sup>35</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Nicholas Abercrombie in his book entitled *Class, Structure and Knowledge: Problems in the Sociology of Knowledge* specifies the social source of this distortion according to Marx. In Abercrombie's words,

Many Marxists, when they talk of the way that [class] interests distort systems of beliefs, speak simultaneously of 'false consciousness'. The supposition is, that to the extent that men's interests shape their beliefs, they are falsely conscious.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, in contrast to all of the above, David Rubinstein in his recent book *Marx and Wittgenstein: Social Praxis and Social Explanation* suggests that by false consciousness Marx was referring in an all-inclusive way to the nonscientific, "commonsense" social understanding of people. Rubinstein bases his interpretation on the base/superstructure method of analysis proposed by Marx in his famous 1859 preface. In Rubinstein's view, Marx's base/superstructure model is characteristic of the materialist structuralist tradition in sociology, a tradition which tends to be skeptical if not dismissive of the nonscientific, commonsense social understanding of people.

From the perspective of this tradition, the nonscientific, commonsense social understanding of people could be characterized as a false social consciousness for several reasons, chief of which are the following: (a) the commonsense social mind tends to only grasp the

appearances of society as given within the limited social experience of social agents, and appearances can be deceiving; (b) the commonsense social mind is generally ignorant of and unable to perceive the systematic forces and causes underlying social events; and finally, (c) for whatever reason, the commonsense social mind tends to be imbued with various illusions about society.

Since commonsense accounts of society can be so off the mark, it is expected that scientific accounts of society will be radically at odds with commonsense accounts, even employing a categorical scheme different from the categories of common sense. This mistrust of the commonsense social mind and the acceptance of a radical difference between scientific and commonsense accounts of society is evident, in Rubinstein's opinion, in Marx's remarks in his 1859 preface. In Marx's words,

In considering...[social] transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic—in short, ideological—forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained...

Rubinstein comments as follows on the above remarks of Marx:

Many aspects of Marx's thought appear to flow from this distinction between objective existence and subjective consciousness: the concept of false consciousness, his theory of social change as initiated by changes in productive relations...<sup>37</sup>

In summary, we see that for those who do interpret Marx as having a conception of ideology as false consciousness, Marx's notion of false consciousness means several different things. According to these commentators, by false consciousness Marx meant:

1. a deluded social consciousness or collective self-deception;
2. an alienated consciousness (sometimes referred to as a reified social consciousness);

4. the manipulated social consciousness of the oppressed;
5. a distorted and false social understanding and perception;
6. the nonscientific, commonsense social consciousness.

For many of the above commentators, Marx's notion of false consciousness (like Engels's) represents an inheritance from previous thinkers influential in the shaping of Marx's (and Engels's) own thoughts on ideology. Furthermore, what's suggested by this intellectual influence on Marx (and Engels) is that the notion of false consciousness itself has a history, with different particular meanings within this history.

In spite of the diverse and often confusing influences Marx's predecessors may have on our attempts to interpret the meaning of Marx's conception of ideology, I submit that an appreciation of this historical and intellectual legacy is crucial for understanding the meaning of Marx's conception of ideology, and, of equal importance, for demonstrating that Marx's conception of ideology is best understood in terms of the notion of false consciousness. In the following pages we will explicate this historical legacy. And in tracing this history, not only will we be uncovering the origins of Marx's (and Engels's) own conception of ideology, but at the same time we will be shedding light on the elusive but captivating notion of false consciousness.

Since I will be retracing the influence of this historical legacy on Marx and Engels, the chapters in this book are organized by the order in which each of the major theorists on ideological false consciousness historically appeared. Hence, in the second chapter we begin with Bacon's theory of the idols and draw comparisons between Marx views on ideological fallacies and Bacon's views. In the third chapter we explore the French Enlightenment's critiques of metaphysics and religion, and show how these critiques influenced Marx's and Engels's views on idealist ideologies and ruling-class ideologies. In the fourth chapter we demonstrate the influence of Hegel's philosophy of history (and French Enlightenment views) on Marx's and Engels's views concerning the political false consciousness. In the fifth chapter we begin with an examination of Hegel's model of the alienated mind and its influence on Feuerbach in his critique of the religious false consciousness. The fifth and sixth chapters go on to demonstrate the influence of Feuerbachian and Hegelian conceptions on the young

Marx's views concerning the alienated false consciousness in politics and economics. Finally, in the seventh chapter we demonstrate how Marx's theory in *Capital* concerning commodity fetishisms and the ideological nature of common sense incorporates views from his earlier writings about the alienated consciousness.

While the chapters are organized in historical order, there is a kind of "dialectical" development depicted in my comparisons. In a sense, each historically successive conception of the ideological consciousness builds on its predecessors; in some cases, the successors criticize and replace the theoretical conceptions of their predecessors, while in other cases the successors add a new dimension to the views of their predecessors. In either case, new and more sophisticated theories concerning the ideological consciousness are developed in this dialectical way involving critique and incorporation.

For example, while Bacon's theory of idols provided a foundation for the *philosophes*' critique of "prejudices," at the same time the *philosophes* added a new social dimension to Bacon's critique of idols. In the hands of the *philosophes*, Bacon's critique was transformed into a critique of dominant social ideologies. In turn, while the French Enlightenment's version of the dominant ideology thesis was to influence both Marx and Engels, at the same time the latter were critical of their French Enlightenment predecessors. As a result, Marx and Engels sought to develop a more systematic class and historical materialist analysis of ideologies as opposed to the conspiratorial views of their eighteenth-century predecessors. Finally, while the Baconian-French Enlightenment tradition provided Marx and Engels with one model for understanding the alienated false consciousness, the Hegelian-Feuerbachian tradition provided them with a different and, in some ways, more sophisticated model.